



Circle of Protection  
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January 27, 2014

Dear Representative/Senator,

As leaders of the Circle of Protection, a broad and diverse group of Christian religious leaders from across denominations, we urge you to extend federal emergency unemployment benefits immediately. With 10.4 million people unemployed and three job seekers for every job opening, a moral obligation exists to help protect the life and dignity of unemployed workers and their families. Just days after Christmas, 1.3 million unemployed workers were cut off from emergency unemployment assistance. It is time to correct this wrong.

While the unemployment insurance program does not cover all unemployed workers, it serves as a lifeline for many families across this country who are struggling to get back on their feet after being laid off through no fault of their own. This assistance is vital. It helps people look for work, put food on the table, and keep their homes after losing their jobs. It provides a sense of security during difficult and stressful times. Even with recent economic growth, there are still 1.2 million fewer jobs than at the beginning of the recession nearly 6 years ago. Nearly two-fifths of unemployed people, or nearly 4 million people, have been looking for work for more than six months.

Additionally, please refrain from paying for extending unemployment benefits by cutting other important low-income programs. Refundable tax credits, like the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit, are some of the most effective anti-poverty programs in the country, keeping over 10 million people out of poverty, including 5.3 million children.

We urge you to pass an extension of federal unemployment benefits immediately and to do so without further burdening poor and vulnerable families who are already struggling in this tough economy.

Sincerely,

Alexander D. Baumgarten, director of government relations, The Episcopal Church

David Beckmann, president, Bread for the World

Galen Carey, vice president for government relations, National Association of Evangelicals

Jim Wallis, president and founder, Sojourners

Jim Winkler, president and general secretary, National Council of Churches

Stacy Martin, director of policy and advocacy, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski, Archbishop of Miami, Chairman, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development